

Changing Tides

Summer
2012

Newsletter for Teesmouth and Cleveland European Marine Site

Issue 1

Welcome to Issue 1 of Changing Tides, the newsletter for the Teesmouth and Cleveland European Marine Site.

Changing Tides is our seasonal newsletter, but it is also the name for the communication strategy that we are using to spread the word about the European Marine Site to the wider community. It includes this newsletter and, funding permitting, a website and interpretation panels outlining the work we do and the Code of Conduct that we have produced.

Within this newsletter we will give an insight into the Why, Where, What and Who of the EMS, have a brief look at our shiny new Code of Conduct, provide a useful bird i.d. guide and more.

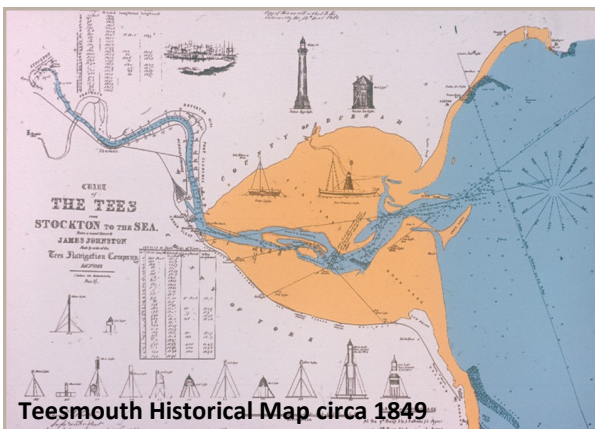
We hope you enjoy the read and we are very interested in getting feedback from you on how you like the look and layout. If there is something that you are interested in and would like to see here in the future please get in touch with [Maeve Lee](mailto:maeve.lee@inca.uk.com) (maeve.lee@inca.uk.com).



Turnstone at South Gare, © Katherine Simpson

Why, Where, What and Who!

In 1995 The Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast was designated as a Special Area of Protection under European Law as an internationally important site for waterbirds. This was a significant move since the area is better known as an industrial coastline. Historically vast intertidal mudflats and marshes extended over thousands of hectares on both sides of the Tees Estuary. From the late 1800s, as industry began to dominate the area, the region saw a loss of over 90% of the intertidal mudflats and sandbanks, as well as a hugely significant increase in levels of air and water pollution. Land was reclaimed to make room for industry and this reclamation, using blast furnace slag continued until the 1970s.



Good news for nature followed. Since the 1980s industrial emissions to the air and water have significantly been reduced. We now have a thriving estuary once more.

Why?

The area is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under Article 4.1 of the 1979 Birds Directive for supporting internationally important populations of regularly occurring migratory species and internationally important assemblages of waterbirds. The intertidal and sub-tidal areas of the SPA are known as the European Marine Site (EMS). The condition of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) which make up the SPA and the EMS are routinely assessed by Natural England. Although the site is designated for bird populations it is also important for seal populations. In the 1930s harbour seals left the area due to the impacts of industry but have since re-colonised the site and are now breeding in record numbers. The best place to see these is at the haul-out site at Greatham Creek where a new viewing area has recently been opened to the public.



Harbour seals at Greatham Creek



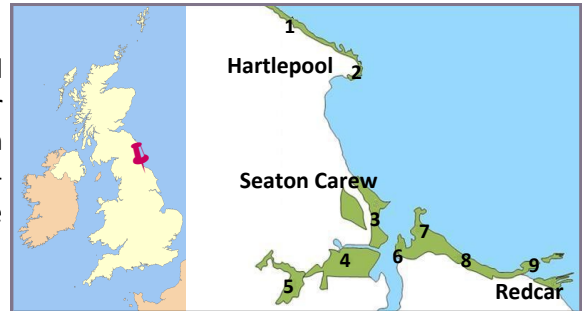


Where?

The Teessmouth and Cleveland Coast European Marine site is located on the North East Coast of England between Crimdon and Redcar Rocks, encompassing some 29km of coast. It is easily accessible from the main roads. The coastline with its industrial backdrop is very special with many of the industries having wildlife at the forefront of the management of the land that they hold.

What?

The EMS is designated for its important populations of wintering and migratory birds. The site is managed through a partnership of authorities. The EMS has a management scheme which assists the authorities to meet their responsibilities. It allows the EMS to reach and maintain favourable condition and meet the conservation objectives set by Natural England.



1	North Sands	4	Seal Sands	7	South Gare
2	Hartlepool Headland	5	Cowpen Marsh	8	Coatham Sands
3	North Gare	6	Bran Sands	9	Redcar Rocks

Who?

Industry Nature Conservation Association (INCA) host the EMS Officer at the Wilton International Site near Redcar. INCA's aim is to maintain a balance between industry and nature conservation within the Tees Valley (see [here](#) for more information). The EMS officer in post since March 2012 is Maeve Lee. The previous post holder, Katherine Simpson, has moved on to pursue a PhD in Stirling University. On completing her MSc in Newcastle University, Maeve went on to work with the Durham Heritage Coast Partnership as a Project Officer for a coastal climate change adaption project. Now as Project Officer for the Teessmouth and Cleveland Coast EMS Maeve will follow in the footsteps of Katherine to continue the great work that has been done for the area.



Maeve Lee the new EMS Officer

Voluntary Code of Conduct

Do I need to follow the code?

- ⇒ Do you enjoy a walk at the coast? Maybe you walk your dog there?
- ⇒ Do you ride your horse up and down the foreshore?
- ⇒ Do you visit North Gare, Bran Sands and South Gare for water sports?
- ⇒ Do you collect bait or go fishing along this stretch of coast?
- ⇒ Are you part of a group or do you take groups to visit the coast?
- ⇒ Do you enjoy going bird watching or wild-life watching?

The code of conduct was developed with a range of committed groups active on the Tees Coast. A number of useful focus groups were established and all associated members were consulted before the most appropriate code was produced.

If you answered yes to any of these questions then the Coastal Code is for you!

Within the code there are different sections addressing how best to undertake specific activities along with a sea shore code and important contacts. The final product is a useful tool for those coming to visit and using the coast.

See www.inca.uk.com for a downloadable version

Teessmouth & Cleveland Coast

European Marine Site Coastal Code

Helping to keep your coast beautiful

Please contact [Maeve Lee](#) for your copy of the code or click [here](#) to download a copy directly





What can you find on the coast?



Sunrise over North Tees

The Teessmouth and Cleveland Coast and Tees Estuary are highly valued for their wild-life and special habitats.

The sites of most importance within the EMS for bird populations are the mudflats and rocky shores. It is along these sites that the birds will forage for the majority of their food. The most important food sources on the rocky shores are common mussel, limpets, periwinkles and shore crabs. The mudflats along the estuary also offer rich feeding grounds for bird populations. Protein rich invertebrates found within the mud such as worms and burrowing bivalves are a key source of food for the birds.



Redshank feeding on a mussel bed



Bee Orchid

The sand dunes on the coast are remarkably rich in wildlife supporting a wealth of plants and animals. Key plants of interest are lyme grass, prickly saltwort and several special species of orchid such as the pyramidal and bee orchids. The dunes also are home to important and locally-rare species of butterfly, moth and spiders.

The map below outlines which habitats and species are found along the coast. The list of birds is a small representation of those that are found throughout the EMS. Those listed are the most commonly sighted. The little tern is possibly the least common species with the most significant population found nesting at Crimdon Denemouth from May to August.



Little terns at Crimdon © Colin Foster



Key species on the EMS

Birds

Except for the little tern all these species of shore birds are common within the EMS. Remember to take your binoculars to be able to spot them at a safe distance

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| ✕ Oystercatcher | ✕ Lapwing |
| ✕ Golden plover | ✕ Ringed plover |
| ✕ Grey plover | ✕ Curlew |
| ✕ Purple sandpiper | ✕ Redshank |
| ✕ Sanderling | ✕ Turnstone |
| ✕ Knot | ✕ Dunlin |
| ✕ Bar-tailed godwit | ✕ Black-tailed godwit |
| ✕ Little tern | ✕ Sandwich tern |

Seals

Both species of seals can be seen from the seal hide at Greatham Creek and from bird hides and pathways approaching Seal Sands. Please do not disturb these quiet, shy and intriguing animals.

- ✕ Harbour Seal
- ✕ Grey Seal





Recreational Disturbance Project

From surveys carried out by it was concluded that recreational activities were having a negative effect on important bird populations within the Teesmouth EMS. To further investigate this a disturbance project was carried out locally through the winter of 2011/2012 to monitor and record the types of activities taking place along the coast and investigate their effect on the wintering bird populations

Any disturbance to birds can be damaging as it means that they are squandering energy rather than foraging for food or resting. This is especially a problem during the winter months when wintering and migratory birds need to maximise their feeding time because of restricted daylight and poor weather.



While it is wonderful that the coast is getting more recognised for its natural beauty this means that there are more visitors and thus a lot more activity on the site that can disturb the birds. It is important that both existing and new recreational visitors behave responsibly, hence this initiative to investigate if users are impacting on bird populations. The Code of Conduct is a useful tool to help inform visitors on how to minimise disturbance to bird populations.

The data that has been collected over the winter 2011 / 2012 will be interpreted by Rachel Linaker an MSc student from York University. As part of her MSc thesis Rachel will analyse the data and integrate it into a GIS system. This will allow us to understand to what extent the birds are being disturbed and by which activities. Rachel will compile a report that will be made available to the EMS Management Group in September 2012.

Bird monitoring is an integral part of assessing the site condition at the EMS. Over the winter 2011 / 2012 a bird disturbance survey was carried out to determine which activities are the most detrimental to shore bird populations as well as the level of disruption. To continue these surveys we need your help. We would like to talk to those who would be interested in carrying out surveys over the summer and winter months. Surveys would be used to assess the populations that occur along the coast along with the types of activities that are disturbing these birds.

Seal watch - The seals are present all year round on the EMS but the summer is a particularly special time of the year when the females are giving birth to pups. If you are going to have a look at these spectacular animals we would love to hear about your visit.



Shore Watch - Unfortunately we can't always be out on the coast so we need residents and visitors to the coast to be our eyes and ears. We are always keen to know what is happening throughout the EMS and always appreciate feedback that we can get from users of the site. If you spot anything interesting while out and about please let us know!

Litter is a great concern within the EMS and along the Tees coast. As well as it being incredibly unsightly it is a health hazard to humans and animals so we urge you to not to leave any litter (including dog waste). You could even carry a rubbish bag with you on your walk to pick up any litter you may come across (please remember to be extremely cautious and safe if picking up litter not belonging to you). Ask Maeve Lee about litter picks that will be coming up throughout the summer.

Contact

Maeve Lee, Project Officer
Teesmouth and Cleveland EMS
Email maeve.lee@inca.uk.com
Phone 0772 561 7410
Web www.inca.uk.com





Changing Tides Project

The Changing Tides project aims to raise awareness about our wonderful and unique coastline and estuary. To date we have published a voluntary Code of Conduct to help balance the enjoyment of visitors with minimizing disturbance to the birds.

Following the Code of Conduct is the publication of this newsletter that will help further promote the attractiveness and importance of the EMS.

The next phase, depending on funding, will be to design and launch a website specific for the EMS. Along with this we hope to design and install five interpretation panels along the coast promoting the Code of Conduct.



Turnstone at South Gare

What's on over the summer

21st June - Wildflower Walk, Teemouth NNR.
21st July - Seal Walk, Greatham Creek.
5th August - Beachwatch, North Gare Sands.
8th August - The Olimpet Games, Seaton coach park.

Booking
Essential
please call
01429853325

16th August - Sensational Seals and Brilliant Birds, Greatham Creek.
23rd August - Scavenger Hunt and Beach Art, North Gare.
21st August - Deadly Seashore!
31st August - Seal Walk, Greatham

Bird identification key

There are a great number of birds found within the EMS. Within each newsletter we will highlight some species and outline how best to identify these species while out and about. In this edition of the newsletter we will look at oystercatcher and redshank (the bird behind the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast EMS logo!). Happy birding and remember to follow the Code when you are out on the site!

Oystercatcher
(*Haematopus ostralegus*)

Long orange-red bill

Black and white body

Red-pink legs

In flight

White band with black trailing edge

© Oystercatcher photos from virtualheb.co.uk

Size: W - 540g L - 42cm WS - 83cm
Food: Cockles and mussels when on shore

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)

Medium length bill with reddish colour at base

Brown speckled back & wings, pale belly

Red legs

In flight

Distinctive white trailing edge

Size: W - 110g (M) / 130g (F) L - 28cm
WS - 62cm
Food: Marine worms, molluscs

KEY: W ~ Weight, L ~ Length, WS ~ Wing Span, M ~ Male, F ~ Female

We are very excited about the upcoming work to be done within the EMS and love to hear about what you did and saw during your visit to the site. If you have anything you would like to share with us please get in touch with the project officer, Maeve Lee. You can find us on [Facebook](#) (search for Teesmouth and Cleveland EMS), [Twitter](#) (@TeesCoast), on [email](mailto:maeve.lee@inca.uk.com) (maeve.lee@inca.uk.com) and phone (0772 561 7410).

